

Lord Evans' statement on the Government's response to the Committee's report on local government ethical standards

Press release

Lord Evans has responded to the publication of the Government's response to the Committee's report on local government ethical standards



Today, [the Government has published its response to the Committee's 2019 report, Local Government Ethical Standards](#).

In response, Lord Evans said:

“While we note the government’s commitment to further work to support local government, the Committee is disappointed that many of its careful recommendations have not been accepted. It was clear from our evidence that the sector backed our call to strengthen the arrangements in place to support high ethical standards, whilst respecting the benefits of a localised approach.

We are pleased that many local authorities have already reviewed their approach as a result of this work and are adopting the best practice points from the report. Across all tiers of local government, decisions are taken about a wide range of local services using public funds, so it is important that there are robust governance arrangements that command public confidence.”

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How your pensions can help tackle climate change

Not only do we believe that tackling climate change is right for the planet, green investments represent a huge opportunity for the UK's financial services sector. And getting this right is a key part of the Chancellor's vision to make the UK the global hub of choice for green finance.

As ministers representing different departments, we are working together to support the green agenda. Last October, the UK was the first country in the world to require trustees of occupational pension schemes to identify, manage, and report on the climate-related risks and opportunities within their portfolios.

By October this year, 81% of occupational pension scheme assets will be assessed and the disclosures will be published in the months that follow. And because we know that forests and land use are a significant source of carbon emissions, any action on climate change will need to take deforestation into account. These measures will deliver a new level of accountability, with pension savers able to see the impact of their investments and better understand how risks are being considered and mitigated.

During our COP26 Presidency, we are putting forests front and centre of our global response to climate change. Ending deforestation would make the single largest contribution to greenhouse gases reduction targets for 2030, taking 3.5 gigatons of carbon out of the system every single year. That's 10% of the emissions reductions we need during this decade.

At COP26, we were delighted that 141 countries representing 90% of the world's forests committed to ending forest loss and land degradation by 2030. The declaration was bolstered by unprecedented public, private, and philanthropic investment, amounting to around \$20 billion. The world's biggest buyers of forest-risk commodities and all the main multilateral development banks committed to align with our climate goals and the recovery of nature – which, in turn, will help to protect millions of livelihoods and natural habitats around the world.

We were pleased that several significant UK-based pension funds committed to transitioning their portfolios away from activities that are driving deforestation. And with the new requirements from October 2021 on climate-related financial disclosure, shareholders, members, and constituents can now see and understand the progress that is being made.

It is clear that the British people care passionately about making sure their savings are part of the solutions, and they deserve to know whether pension fund managers are using their hard-earned money in a way that jeopardises or prioritises the future for which they are saving. In the coming weeks we will be reaching out to UK pension funds, to help them further understand deforestation issues and how to manage this risk as effectively as possible.

The UK Presidency of COP26 continues until we hand the baton to Egypt towards the end of this year; our priority is to ensure we achieve the outcomes secured in Glasgow last November and keep leading by example.

Our pensions can play a crucial role in driving forward our pledge to protect precious natural habitats and reduce emissions in the years to come.

Contingent liability expertise

The Contingent Liability Central Capability (CLCC) is an analytical and advisory unit within [UK Government Investments \(UKGI\)](#).

The CLCC has been established to strengthen contingent liability expertise across government by improving the overall ability to manage the government's portfolio of risk from contingent liabilities.

This complements the existing support the Government Actuary's Department (GAD) provides to government departments on financial risks, including contingent liabilities.

What is a contingent liability?

A contingent liability represents a government commitment to possible future expenditure if specific adverse events occur.

Some contingent liabilities are loan guarantees where government agrees to pay the debts of a third party if they default. An example is the Export Development Guarantee scheme run by UK Export Finance.

Some other contingent liabilities include indemnities (protection similar to insurance) where government agrees to cover costs such as clinical negligence claims against NHS GPs.

The role of the CLCC

The CLCC team has a diverse skillset brought in by actuaries seconded from GAD, credit risk experts, policy professionals and analysts.

The team's main areas of focus are to:

1. provide departments with expert and timely analysis of proposed and existing contingent liabilities
2. build a database to collate information, review, and report on the government's overall portfolio of contingent liabilities
3. provide guidance and promote best practice across government

The team has also set up a network of contingent liability practitioners

across Whitehall. The Contingent Liability Advisory Network provides a regular forum for discussing common issues.

Advice and support on contingent liabilities

Departments are encouraged to come to the CLCC with all issues related to new contingent liabilities, with early engagement particularly helpful for the team.

The CLCC will either be able to provide advice directly or they will signpost you to GAD when our support is required.

The CLCC works very closely with GAD, and is designed to complement, rather than replace, GAD's existing support to departments.

Next steps

In the next few months, the CLCC will:

- conduct projects with selected departments to review their existing stock of contingent liabilities
- continue to provide advice and support on new contingent liabilities
- build on its network to share case studies and best practice

Get in touch

If you would like to discuss any contingent liability issues or would be interested in participating in the Contingent Liability Advisory Network, email: CLCC@ukgi.org.uk. You can also contact GAD at: enquiries@gad.gov.uk.

Public play key role in refined £1bn plan to transform the A66

National Highways has listened to the opinions of people and taken action by refining designs for the £1bn A66 Northern Trans-Pennine project.

The project will lead to significant improvements to the A66 between M6 junction 40 and A1 at Scotch Corner by dualling the remaining single carriageway sections of the route and upgrading key junctions.

The road runs east to west across northern England, providing access to the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the Yorkshire Dales and the Lake District National Park, as well as carrying high levels of freight. However, the route is not up to modern standards, meaning drivers face congestion, delays at key junctions and substandard access to jobs and leisure locations.

Today, National Highways publishes its Statutory Consultation Summary Report alongside a Winter 2022 Project Update setting out updated plans for the vital project.

Last autumn National Highways spent six weeks talking to communities, drivers and businesses who use the vital route about the proposal. More than 1,200 people and organisations gave their thoughts, while over 1,500 attended a series of public information events.

The responses are helping to shape the final design and inform National Highways' application for a Development Consent Order (DCO) in May 2022 which, if successful, will pave the way for the scheme to go ahead.

Lee Hillyard, National Highways' A66 Northern Trans-Pennine project director, said:

We're delighted so many people have taken such a keen interest in our proposals and I'd like to thank everyone for their responses. Today we've published our statutory consultation summary report and Spring 2022 project update, which is the perfect opportunity to provide the latest information and show how we are acting on the feedback we've received.

While some changes are minor tweaks to the design shared in autumn 2021, others are more substantial. In those areas, National Highways has held targeted non-statutory consultations with local communities, landowners and stakeholders, whose feedback is currently being collected and will be incorporated into our DCO submission.

The provision of walking, cycling and horse riding (WCH) routes has been a major talking point during the route's development and, after listening to feedback, additional WCH routes are now being proposed in some areas.

Lee Hillyard added:

We have listened to the local communities and stakeholders on the issue of WCH, which was one of the most requested topics during consultation. We've maintained and relocated any severed WCH routes which cross the new road, and now we're proposing extra routes. Our new routes will deliver wider connectivity.

The project team have also completed surveys to gain an intricate understanding of the local area including the environment, ecology and heritage, while also exploring ways to mitigate potential impacts like noise, drainage and visual aesthetics. This has created opportunities in various locations to improve environmental and land impacts.

Meanwhile, on the section between Appleby and Brough, we are considering an alternative to the proposed replacement of the travelling community's Brough

Hill Fair site. In the autumn 2021 statutory consultation, a site to the east of Warcop was earmarked on land belonging to the Ministry of Defence – known as the “bivvy” site. An alternative location, approximately 1.6 miles east from the current site, is now also being considered in response to feedback from the Statutory Consultation.

National Highways is keen to hear views on the sites with regards to their suitability for the annual event. As these are potential changes to the design presented in the autumn, a supplementary consultation is being carried out to provide the chance to gather feedback on this specific issue.

To read the consultation summary report and a project, update visit the our [A66 A66 Northern Trans-Pennine web pages](#). You can email us at A66NTP@highwaysengland.co.uk or call 0333 090 1192. Phone lines are open between Monday and Friday, 9am to 5pm, or you can leave a message and the team will return your call.

You can follow the Twitter account [@A66NTP](#) and the Facebook page [A66 Northern Trans-Pennine Project](#).

Members of the public should contact the National Highways customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Journalists should contact the National Highways press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

Nonsense then, and nonsense now: UK statement at the Security Council

Thank you, Mr. President, and may I join others in expressing our deep condolences to the Irish Mission and to the family of Jim Kelly – he was an exceptional and very well-loved colleague, and we will miss him. Thank you.

I also thank Ms Nakamitsu for her briefing today.

Mr President,

Only yesterday, this Council discussed Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. We heard from UN briefers about the devastating impacts on Ukraine, its people and its cities. On the region, to which 3 million refugees have fled. And on the wider international community, facing higher economic prices, and the consequences for countries in need of this Council’s attention.

Today however, we’ve had a rehash of amateurish disinformation, which we discussed and debunked last Friday.

It was nonsense then, and it is nonsense now.

As I said then – laboratories in Ukraine carrying out research on public health hazards are not a threat to international peace and security.

By contrast, President Putin's illegal and inhumane invasion of Ukraine is the most significant threat to international peace and security we face today.

So today's charade is really not worthy of a Permanent Member of the UN Security Council.

The only thing this Council needs to hear from the Russian Federation – we didn't hear it yesterday, we haven't heard it today – the only thing this Council needs to hear is that Russia's troops are leaving Ukraine.

Ukraine does not want war. Russians and Ukrainians – soldiers, civilians, mothers, children – are dying.

Russia is isolated diplomatically, isolated economically and bogged down in Ukraine.

So we urge Russia to stop this invasion now, before any more damage is done in Ukraine – and also to Russia.

I thank you, Mr President.